

HA-1409

1882, 1897  
1910-11

Bel Air Academy & Graded School  
45 E. Gordon Street  
Bel Air  
public

The Bel Air Academy and Graded School was the first brick school building built in Harford County. The first half, a T-shaped section, was built in 1882. The name represents the absorption of the Bel Air Academy into the public school system. The upper grades were held in this building; the lower grades met in the old Academy Building on Pennsylvania Avenue. The building was doubled in 1897, and the south wing was added in 1910-11.

Particularly interesting is the large amount of window space in the building.

## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Bel Air Academy &amp; Graded School

AND/OR COMMON

Harford County Board of Education Offices

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

45 E. Gordon Street

1st

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Harford

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☒ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☒ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☒ OTHER: offices**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Harford County Board of Education

Telephone #: 838-7300

STREET &amp; NUMBER

45 E. Gordon Street

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21014

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Harford County Courthouse

Liber #: 43

Folio #: 478

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	1897, 1911, 1951	

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This two story, eight bay common bond brick school building with a three bay addition is at 45 East Gordon Street in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. It has a slate roof whose various ridge lines and gables attest to additions made over time. The 1882 building consisted of the two bay by one projecting pavilion to the north and the three bay section directly behind that to the south. The 1897 addition doubled the size by repeating the original building with the plan flipped over, giving a balanced building of eight bays on the east and west elevations with four bays on the north and south, the center two of which project. That gave the building two gable roofs with their ridge lines going east and west and met at right angles by another gable roof at each end. The two gables east and west had a bull's-eye window with cross mullions in each. The north and south gables have 8 pane vertical windows. (The south gable is that of the 1910 addition which extended the south end 3 bays.) The rest of the windows are alike: 6/6 double hung sash with a rectangular transom headed by a segmental brick arch and having a granite sill. Many of the transoms are now blocked. On the east and west elevations the windows are grouped one, two, one and one, two, one again. There is a plain capped outside end chimney in the south gable (that of the 1910 addition). The 1897 building had entrances in the east and west elevations of the north and south projecting pavilions. The staircases are in these pavilions. In keeping with the practice of the time boys and girls probably entered different doors, although it is possible the students whose home rooms were on the east side of the building entered there and the students on the west side entered there. The entrances on the west side are still used. Those on the east have been blocked. The door heads are like the window heads segmental brick arches. Both entries today have a frame air lock built out from the wall.

The staircase which rises in the north wall (in the northern projection) is original. It is an open string, dog-leg run with turned balusters and the fat turned newel so common in Victorian Bel Air. All the rest of the interior was altered in 1951 when the building was re-modeled to hold offices. The outside gives a very clear idea of what the layout was, however. The north and south pavilions carried the staircases. After the addition of the 1910 wing, the staircase at that end of the old building continued in service. The center portions of the 1897 building had a central hall with classrooms on either side, four up and four down. The 1910 wing held two more, one up and one down, and a third in the single story building south of the two story building.

The building had no provision for lights according to the 1904 insurance map and it was heated by stoves. The furnace and the chimney probably came with the 1910 wing.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1882; 1897/1910-11 ~~1882-1883~~ Contractor  
John F. Lingan/D.J. Shanahan

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The former Bel Air Academy and Graded School Building on Gordon Street, now the offices of the Harford County Board of Education, was the first brick school building built in Harford County. It served as high school and grade school until the early 1950's.

By 1880 the small school on Main Street was overcrowded. In December 1881 the school board leased the lot on Gordon Street from Charles W. Lee and his wife (43/478) for \$66 a year. The ground rent was redeemed in 1893. The north four bays of the present building, containing four rooms, two up and two down, was built in 1882-83 by John F. Lingan for \$4,356.

The Bel Air Academy and the School Commissioners signed a contract to join forces in 1888, the Academy Trustees retaining the right to approve all teachers and to appoint the principal. The three primary grades were lodged in the academy building on Pennsylvania Avenue. The new school housed the rest of the school.

The building was doubled in 1897 by adding another four classrooms (four more bays) at a cost of \$3,850. In 1907 the Bel Air Academy and Graded School became Bel Air High School (the Pennsylvania Avenue building having been sold in 1900) and the course was extended to eleven grades. By 1910 there were a commercial course, manual training, and agriculture courses, as well as the college preparatory course and the course had been extended to the present four years. In 1910-11 the building was extended three bays to the south giving three new classrooms, making a total of eleven rooms. In 1924 when the school to the east was finished, the high school moved over there and the old building became the Bel Air Elementary School housing grades 1 through 7.

In 1950 the present Bel Air High School was built, the grade school moved to the old High School, and, in 1951, this building became the offices of the County Board of Education. The interior has been completely remodeled, although the original staircase in the projecting portion of the 1882-83 section (the northernmost portion) remains intact. A good idea of the placement of rooms can, however, be obtained from the outside by looking at the fenestration and the shape of the building. The staircase was (and is) in the projecting section to the north. Then there was a central hall running from north to south with one classroom on either side upstairs and down. The 1897 addition merely provided a duplicate of the original building with the plan flipped. The 1910-11 section had one classroom up and down and a single story classroom south of that. One speculates that the manual training class was in this last section.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Minutes of the Harford County Board of Education  
 Interview with Mr. Barham, Information Officer, August 30, 1979  
 Bel Air Centennial Book  
 Harford Democrat  
 Wright, Our Harford Heritage

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

This property occupies the western part of parcel #593 in the Town of Bel Air.

**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Marilynn Larew, Architectural Historian

2 August 1979

ORGANIZATION

Town of Bel Air

DATE

838-8700

STREET &amp; NUMBER

39 Hickory Avenue

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
 The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 267-1438

The building has functioned happily for nearly a hundred years. It and its 1924 neighbor to the east are now scheduled for demolition, to be replaced by a new elementary school.



MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
21 STATE CIRCLE  
SHAW HOUSE  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HISTORIC SITES SURVEY FIELD SHEET  
Individual Structure Survey Form

SURVEY NUMBER: HA-1409

NEGATIVE FILE NUMBER:

UTM REFERENCES:  
Zone/Easting/Northing

U.S.G.S. QUAD. MAP:

PRESENT FORMAL NAME:  
Board of Education Offices

ORIGINAL FORMAL NAME: Bel Air  
Academy & Graded School

PRESENT USE: Offices

ORIGINAL USE: school

ARCHITECT/ENGINEER:

BUILDER/CONTRACTOR:  
John F. Ligan/D. J. Shanahan

PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE:  
Excellent ( ) Good (X)  
Fair ( ) Poor: ( )

THEME: Architecture

STYLE: vernacular

DATE BUILT:  
1882; 1897/1910-11

COUNTY: Harford

TOWN: Bel Air

LOCATION:

45 E. Gordon Street

COMMON NAME:  
School Board Offices

FUNCTIONAL TYPE: school

OWNER: Harf. Co. Board of Education  
ADDRESS: 45 E. Gordon St.  
Bel Air, Md.

ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC:  
Yes ( ) No ( ) Restricted (X)

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:  
Local (X) State ( ) National ( )

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Structural System

1. Foundation: Stone(X) Brick( ) Concrete( ) Concrete Block( )
2. Wall Structure
  - A. Wood Frame: Post and Beam( ) Balloon( )
  - B. Wood Bearing Masonry: Brick( ) Stone( ) Concrete( ) Concrete Block( )
  - C. Iron( ) D. Steel( ) E. Other:
3. Wall Covering: Clapboard( ) Board and Batten( ) Wood Shingle( ) Shiplap( )  
Novelty( ) Stucco( ) Sheet Metal( ) Aluminum( ) Asphalt Shingle( )  
Brick Veneer(X) Stone Veneer( )  
Bonding Pattern: common Other:
4. Roof Structure
  - A. Truss: Wood( ) Iron( ) Steel( ) Concrete( )
  - B. Other:
5. Roof Covering: Slate(X) Wood Shingle( ) Asphalt Shingle( ) Sheet Metal( )  
Built Up( ) Rolled( ) Tile( ) Other:
6. Engineering Structure:
7. Other: plaincap

Appendages: Porches( ) Towers( ) Cupolas( ) Dormers( ) Chimneys(X) Sheds( ) Ells( )  
Wings (X) Other:

Roof Style: Gable(X) Hip( ) Shed( ) Flat( ) Mansard( ) Gambrel( ) Jerkinhead( )  
Saw Tooth( ) With Monitor( ) With Bellcast( ) With Parapet( ) With False Front( )  
Other:

Number of Stories: 2½

Number of Bays: 8 plus 3 bay wing

Approximate Dimensions: 50' x 135'

Entrance Location: Gordon St.

THREAT TO STRUCTURE:

No Threat( ) Zoning( ) Roads( )  
Development( ) Deterioration( )  
Alteration (X) Other: New school

LOCAL ATTITUDES:

Positive( ) Negative( )  
Mixed( ) Other:

ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL OR STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Wing windows: round brick arch, stone sill 6/6 plus rectangular transom  
 Main block (double gable: bulls eye in gable/same  
 windows Most transoms blocked  
 Outside end chimney in S gable end of wing  
 ventilator (metal) in ridge of middle part  
 Main block: single window(double) single twice  
 entrance in N bay of wing/also 1st bay (W) of projection on  
 wing stepped back  
 Interior: open string dog-leg staircase against N wall - fat  
 Victorian turned newel, turned balusters

RELATED STRUCTURES: (Describe)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

1882 construction of 4 rooms  
 1897 construction of 4 more rooms  
 1910-11 construction of wing

REFERENCES: Interview with Mr. Barham, Board of Education Information  
 Officer, August 30, 1979

MAP: (Indicate North In Circle)



SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:

Open Lane( )Woodland( )Scattered Buildings( )  
 Moderately Built Up( )Densely Built Up( )  
 Residential(X)Commercial(X)  
 Agricultural( )Industrial( )  
 Roadside Strip Development( )  
 Other:

Marilynn Larew

RECORDED BY:

Town of Bel Air

ORGANIZATION:

August 30, 1979

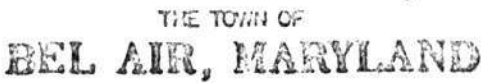
DATE RECORDED:



TITLE: BEL AIR ACADEMY & GRADED SCHOOL  
Gordon Street

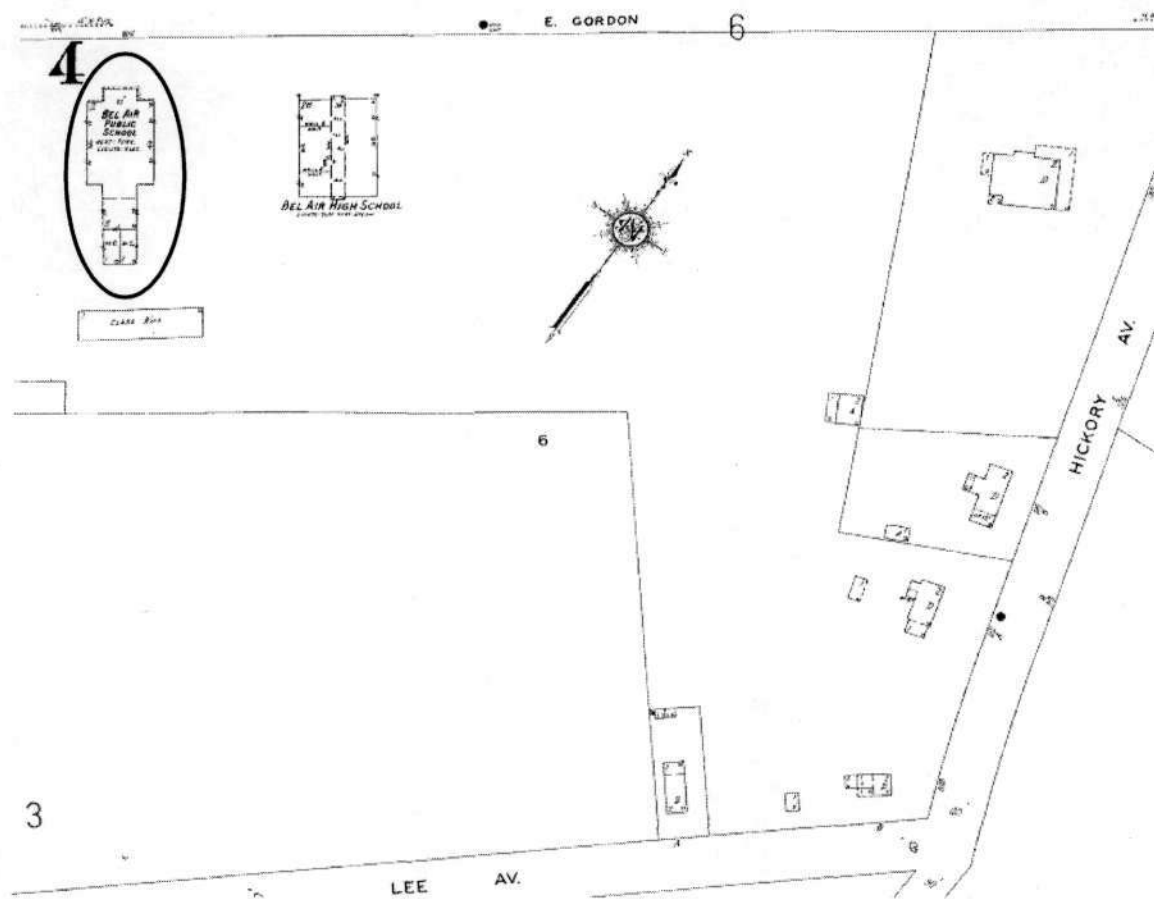
43/478

29 December 1881  
Charles W. Lee and Elizabeth, wife  
to  
Board of County School Commissioners  
lease 1 acre + \$66 per annum  
redeemed 1893

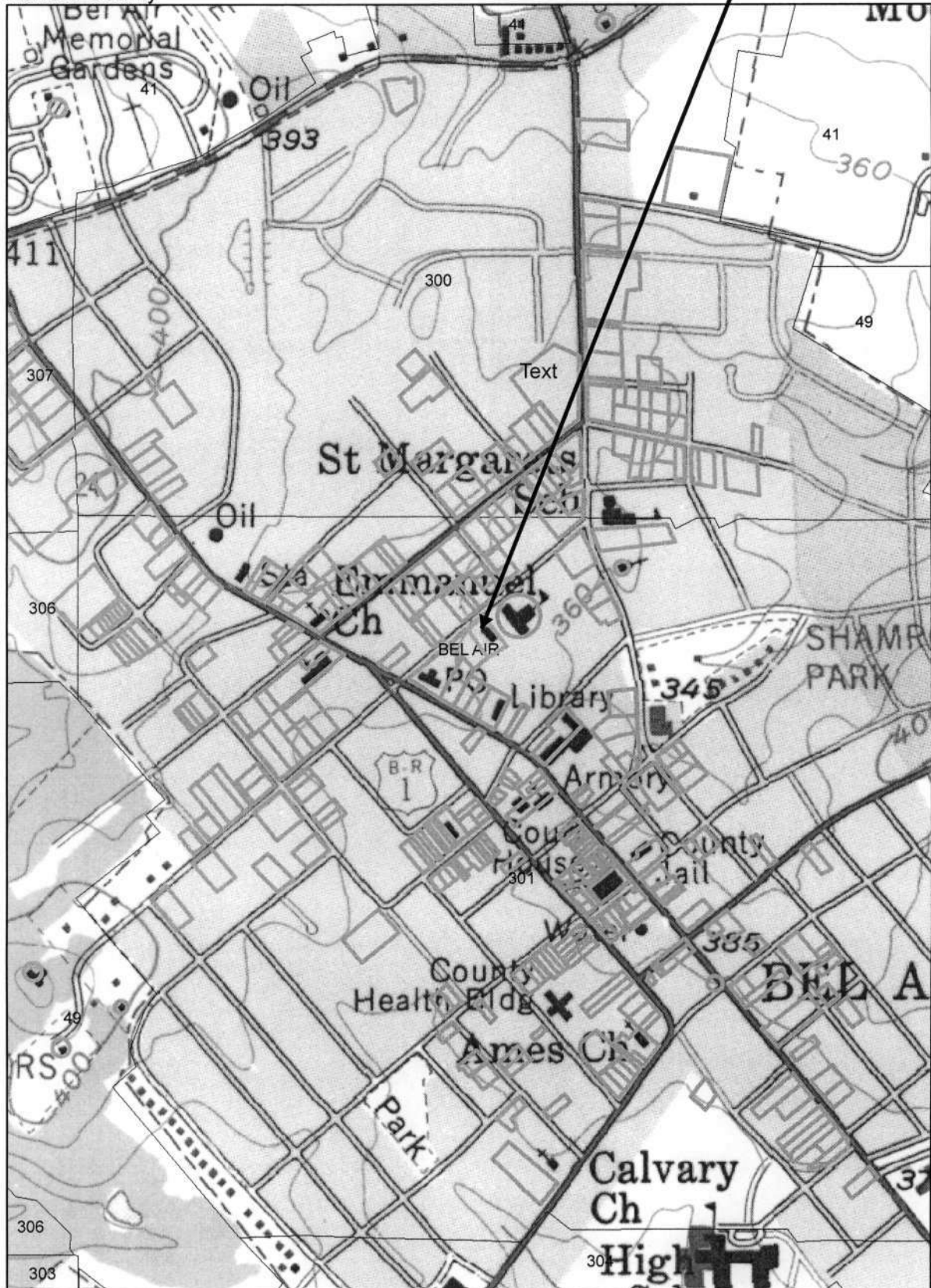


HA- 1409 Bel Air Academy and Graded School  
45 E. Gordon St.

HA-1409  
Bel Air Academy and Graded School  
45 E. Gordon St.  
Bel Air  
Sanborn Bel Air Aug. 1930  
Harford County



HA-1409  
Bel Air Academy and Grade School  
E. Gordon Street  
Bel Air  
Bel Air Quad  
Harford County







HA - 1409

Bel Air Academy + 6 graded School  
45 E. Gordon St. Bel Air  
W + S elev  
M. Larew, 1979



HA-1409

Bel Air Academy & Graded School  
45 E. Gordon, Bel Air

n & w elev

M. Larew, 1979